

expressly state on the record that the amendments to Claims 1-7 are not narrowing and were neither made nor necessary to distinguish the present claims from the prior art. Applicants have also added new Claim 9-21. Support for new Claim 9-21 can be found Claims 2-7, as originally filed.

No new matter has been added. Claims 2-21 are active in this application.

#### REMARKS

At the outset, Applicants representative wishes to thank Examiner Wong for the helpful and courteous discussion held with her on October 4, 2002, during which the prosecution of the above-identified application was materially advanced. The following remarks will expand and summarize the issues discussed.

Present Claims 2-6, and 8-12 relate to methods of preparing a dairy product, comprising modifying a raw material milk by causing transglutaminase to act on said raw material milk, wherein a reducing agent is added to said raw material milk when said transglutaminase is caused to act on said raw material milk.

Present Claim 7 relates to dairy products which have been obtained, or can be obtained, by using the raw material milk modified by the method of Claim 8.

Present Claims 13-21 relate to modified raw material milks, prepared by a method, comprising modifying a raw material milk by causing transglutaminase to act on said raw material milk, wherein a reducing agent is added to said raw material milk when said transglutaminase is caused to act on said raw material milk.

The inventors have surprisingly found that the presently claimed methods afford dairy products with improved physical properties.

The rejection of Claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and the rejection of Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of Dickinson et al is respectfully traversed. Dickinson et al discloses the rheology of certain milk protein gels and protein-stabilized emulsion gels cross-linked with transglutaminase. This reference also discloses the effects of the addition of lecithin.

However, Dickinson et al only discloses the use of lecithin for its emulsifier properties. In support of this assertion, the Examiner's attention is directed to the full publication of Dickinson et al which is being submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed herewith. In particular, the Examiner's attention is directed toward the Abstract on page 1371 and the paragraph bridging pages 1375 and 1376.

There is no disclosure in Dickinson et al of the use of any reducing agents. Moreover, there is no disclosure in Dickinson et al which would remotely suggest the use of any reducing agents. Furthermore, as noted above, the specification has been amended to correct the list of suitable reducing agents, i.e., to delete lecithin from the list.

For all of these reasons, the rejection should be withdrawn.

The objection to Claim 5-7 under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c) has been obviated by appropriate amendment. As the Examiner will note, the claims have been amended to remove all multiple dependencies.

Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance, and early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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**IN THE SPECIFICATION**

Please amend the paragraph from page 13, line 17, to page 14, line 1, as shown on the attached marked-up copy to read as follows:

--Illustrative examples of the reducing agent to be used according to the present invention include thiol compounds such as glutathione, cysteine and  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine; yeast extracts containing at least one of them in high concentrations; thiosulfuric acid, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid and salts thereof which are allowed to be used as food additives; and tocopherols[; glycerine fatty acid esters; and lecithins]. Preparations containing at least one of them are also included in the above reducing agent. The reducing agent to be used according to the present invention is not limited to those listed above as long as it is the one having a reducing effect.--

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel Claim 1, without prejudice toward the further prosecution of this claim in a continuation and/or divisional application.

Please amend the claims as follows:

--2. (Amended) The method of [claim 1] Claim 8, wherein [the] said raw material milk is selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and [or a] processed [milk] milks thereof.

3. (Amended) The method of [claim 1] Claim 8, wherein [the] said raw material milk is a casein-containing solution obtained by processing [one of the milks claimed in claim 2] a raw material milk selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof.

4. (Amended) The method of [claim 1] Claim 8, wherein [the] said reducing agent is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of reduced glutathione, cysteine,  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, [and] salts thereof, [or a preparation] and preparations containing at least one of these reducing agents.

5. (Amended) The method of [any one of claims 1 to 4] Claim 8, wherein [the] said reducing agent is added in an amount of  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-1}$  g per 1 gram of [the] non-fat milk solid, present in said raw material milk.

6. (Amended) The method of [any one of claims 1 to 5] Claim 8, wherein [the] said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of [the] milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

7. (Amended) A dairy product which has been obtained, or can be obtained, by using the raw material milk modified by the method of [any one of claims 1 to 6] Claim 8.--

Please add the following new claims:

--8. (New) to 21. (New)--